

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CU-02 A-01 MCT-01
SY-05 USSS-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SSO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 /072 W
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R 121320Z MAY 77

FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6003
INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CONFIDENTIAL JOHANNESBURG 1161

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SF, PINT
SUBJECT: SOWETO STUDENT-URBAN BANTU COUNCIL WRANGLE CONTINUES

REF: JOHANNESBURG 1142

1. DEMANDS BY SOWETO STUDENTS (ORGANIZED BY SOWETO STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL) THAT THE URBAN BANTU COUNCIL RESIGN HAVE CULMINATED IN AN ALMOST COMPLETE BREAK BETWEEN THE MODERATE THINKING UBC AND THE MILITANT STUDENTS. DESPITE ATTEMPTS TO HOLD A MEETING WEDNESDAY NIGHT (MAY 11) TO DISCUSS ISSUE, STUDENTS HAVE RENEWED DEMANDS THAT UBC COUNCILLORS RESIGN AMID THREATS OF VIOLENCE IF COUNCILLORS REFUSE. ISSUE HAS BEEN FURTHER COMPLICATED BY POLICE ARREST OF TWO STUDENTS AT UBC CHAMBERS SUNDAY. STUDENTS HAVE DEMANDED RELEASE OF TWO DETAINED YOUTHS BEFORE THEY WILL EVEN DISCUSS UBC ISSUE, UBC, FOR THEIR

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PART, WHILE HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH STUDENTS' ARREST, FIND THEMSELVES IN POSITION OF HAVING TO ARGUE WITH SOWETO POLICE OVER ARREST IN ORDER TO RE-ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY WITH STUDENTS.

2. IT WOULD APPEAR THE UBC IS FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE AS THEY ENJOY LITTLE COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN ANY EVENT AND NOW HAVE BEEN

PUSHED EVEN FURTHER ONTO DEFENSIVE OVER THE ARREST OF THE TWO STUDENTS. ONLY IF BRIG VISSER RELEASES THE STUDENTS WILL THE UBC SAVE ANY FACE, AND IN THAT CASE VISSER WOULD BE MADE TO LOOK LIKE HE WAS GIVING INTO STUDENT DEMANDS. VISSER HAS ALREADY INDICATED HE IS NOT PREPARED TO LET STUDENTS DICTATE THE RULES AND EMPHASIZED "WE WILL NOT ALLOW STUDENTS OR ANY OTHER SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY TO TAKE THE LAW INTO ITS OWN HANDS". HE DID INDICATE THAT HE WOULD TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THE 'INVESTIGATIVE CHARGES' LAID AGAINST THE TWO AND EXPEDITE THE JUDICIAL PROCESS TO DETERMINE IF THE STUDENTS SHOULD BE HELD OR RELEASED.

3. COMMENT. WHILE THE ISSUE AT STAKE WOULD APPEAR TO BE OVERBLOWN AT THIS STAGE, THIS MAY BE THE INCIDENT IN THE MAKING SOWETO POLICE FEAR WILL BE USED TO EMBARRASS PRIME MINISTER VORSTER (REFTEL) ON THE EVE OF HIS VISIT WITH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE. THE POTENTIAL FOR DEMONSTRATIONS IN SOWETO IS NEVER FAR BENEATH THE SURFACE AND EVEN A SEEMINGLY MINOR ISSUE SUCH AS THIS ONE CAN BE USED TO PROVOKE OUTBREAKS OF DISORDER.

KIRBY

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 12-May-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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